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Field Trips and Pond Water Studies

Richard Pope

FIELD TRIPS AND POND WATER STUDIES

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"This isn't the first time I've sat alone and listened to nature. As I look down toward the pond, I feel some kind of feeling but I don't know exactly what it is. It is a feeling of happiness, gladness, and peacefulness all mixed together. It doesn't even seem like I'm near Sioux City, where the trucks and cars disturb the peace. When I'm here by myself, I know I want to come back and stay a little longer."

This is what one of my students wrote after a recent field trip to Stone Park. This kind of interest in the out-of-doors by the students certainly helps make the field trips worthwhile.

One of the activities that the students enjoy a great deal is the study of pond water, both before and after our trip. To the student whose curiosity is stirred by the study of nature, the pond offers an unusual and interesting experience. Many of us will never have the chance to visit a seashore or a coral reef (except perhaps on t.v. with Jacques Cousteau) but nearly everyone has access to a pond.

Water from any pond will contain any number and variety of protozoans. In one drop of water, the students can see animals of all shapes and sizes, feeding, resting, moving, and possibly even reproducing.

One day several students were watching the behavior of a rotifer under the bioview. Suddenly it had several smaller ones swimming around it. The entire class had to come and see because the students were sure that they had just seen the little animal give birth.

Pond study can be as simple or as elaborate as you care to make it. For the most part, we use 40X microscopes, a bioview, several ecology books from the resource center, transparent plastic bowls, and the students notebooks.

A wide variety of pond animals both large and small can be kept in the classroom with a minimum of care and equipment. At present, we have several aquariums that we use. Fish, tadpoles, crayfish, a baby snapping turtle, and a multitude of one-celled animals occupy these aquariums.

The first several days that we study pond water, the students just find and observe the different kinds of algae and protozoans. We make no attempt to give any scientific names to anything they find. Even

help from me is minimal, because I want their discoveries to be their own. The second or third day, I do have them make drawings of what they find. I think by doing this, they do observe more closely and pay more attention to detail. The drawings are later shaded in with colored pencils and put on a bulletin board. They make an attractive display and the students enjoy comparing "their" animals with those that other students found. This, in itself, is interesting because it's probably impossible to predict what species of animals and plants will be found in any given pond.

Before we finish our study (3-4 weeks) we do discuss the names of some of the more common types of water animals. I always enjoy listening to the students later as they use the microscopes. Words that only a couple of days before were like a foreign language are now used with authority and surprising accuracy. Many of the pond animals are not just "funny little bugs" anymore but some of them have become paramecium, amoeba, and cyclops.

SSMA CONVENTION TO BE HELD IN CINCINNATI IN NOVEMBER

The School Science and Mathematics Association will hold its 1974 national convention in the Netherland Hilton Hotel in Cincinnati on November 7, 8, and 9. Classroom teachers and other school personnel interested in the improvement of mathematics and science instruction in grades K through 12 are invited to attend, whether or not they are members of the Association.

There will be a large offering of section meetings, workshops, presentations of research papers, and teacher-devised demonstrations, ranging widely in subject-matter and in grade-level. There will be commercial displays, audiovisual previews, student exhibits, and a curriculum center. Several nationally and internationally prominent science and mathematics educators will be featured as general session speakers.

Convention activities will get under way on the afternoon of Thursday, November 7, and participants may register at the door. However, special rates are available for those who pre-register through forms included in the program booklet. A program booklet may be obtained by sending name and address to Dr. William Rouse, SSMA Convention, 302 McGuffey Hall, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio 45056.